

Statement by Estonia
At Governing Council of
Community of Democracies

2 March 2022

Secretary-General, Foreign Minister, dear colleagues,

As Estonia was preparing to celebrate its 104th birthday, a true celebration of democracy on the 24th of February, we witnessed how Russia cannot tolerate a Ukrainian state which is democratic and independent in building a better future for itself.

Since 2014, Russia has been violating Ukraine's territorial integrity. Now Russia is also violating Ukraine's sovereignty by clearly aiming to overthrow Ukraine's democratically elected president and government by means of war.

In-mid February, as Estonia was hosting a Global Conference for Media Freedom in Tallinn, we were honoured to have with us a Russian journalist, Nobel peace prize laureate Dmitri Muratov. Let me now quote his award ceremony speech from DEcember of last year:

The world has fallen out of love for democracy. The world has begun to turn to dictatorship. The dictatorships have secured access to violence.

Russia's invasion is a clear, gross and completely unacceptable violation of international norms. It is a direct attack against democracy and the free world. These horrid aggression has already resulted in tremendous human tragedy and a humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Ukraine. The devastating consequences of this aggression – not only for Europe, but globally – cannot be overstated. It is heart-breaking to see the heavy casualties and the loss of innocent lives, resulting from this unjustified attack. Latest developments show no sign that Putin intends to back down. We fear increased suffering in the time ahead with potentially large numbers of casualties and extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure. We see fighting unfolding in and around urban areas.

The international community must send a strong and united political message explicitly condemning Russia's illegal actions against peaceful Ukrainian population. Our support to Ukraine must continue in all areas – political, economic, financial, humanitarian and military.

Estonia has stepped up humanitarian assistance to Ukraine: in 2022, we have allocated more than million EUR via international organisations, NGO-s and in-kind assistance through the EU civil protection mechanism. In addition, we have redirected 880 000 EUR from development cooperation funds for refugee response, in particular in Moldova. Estonian civil society and private sector are also doing their share as they have jointly raised more than 2 million EUR to provide assistance to Ukraine. The Estonian pharmaceutical wholesaler Magnum is contributing in-kind first aid equipment for 1 million EUR; the Estonian transportation company Bolt has announced more than 5 million to be donated over the next weeks to support Ukraine. Further possibilities to help are being sought constantly.

I am glad to witness the unwavering support of Estonian people to Ukraine. This was demonstrated by tens of thousands of people who gathered on the Freedom Square of Tallinn on 26 February to express solidarity with Ukraine and call for Russia to halt its invasion. These powerful messages have also been sent from many other places in the world.

We are thankful for organizers of this emergency meeting and for expressing support to Ukraine. We also hope that the Community of Democracies can contribute to alleviating the situation on the ground.